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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

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3 FEB 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, (S)National Reconnaissance Office

SUBJECT: IDEALIST Program Summary

REFERENCE: Memorandum from D(S)NRO to Director, Program B,
subject: IDEALIST Program Summary, dated 30
November 1964, [REDACTED]

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1. In order to forecast the life expectancy and utility of the U-2, it is necessary to assess briefly the capabilities of other covert reconnaissance systems in being, both satellite and manned.

a. CORONA. Basically, the KH-4 role is one of search reconnaissance and broad area surveillance. Presumably, the system has nearly reached the ultimate in its performance. The results of NPIC comparison of the KH-4 product to U-2 photography over Cuba demonstrate that KH-4 is not the successor to manned aircraft reconnaissance.

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c. Albeit, a SKYLARK capability is being developed, and the general OXCART capability is being improved, it is not foreseen within the immediate future that the OXCART will be technically ready for employment over the Sino-Soviet bloc.

2. It is apparent from the above that there is no successor to U-2 reconnaissance in the immediate future. It may be therefore assumed that the life expectancy for the U-2 will be at least two more years, operating in the same general areas as at present - China, North Korea, Sino-Indian border, Southeast Asia, Cuba, [REDACTED] and wherever a requirement may be generated.

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3. Beyond 1966, the requirement for the U-2 becomes less clear as to identification of specific target areas. It can be assumed, however, that the international scene will be no less parlous than it is now, and crises will continue to occur which will require covert reconnaissance. They could occur in South America, Africa, the Middle East, and Indonesia. For reasons of mobility, economy, reliability, and quick response, the U-2 would be the appropriate reconnaissance vehicle.

4. The useful life of the U-2 is limited by the introduction of unfavorable defensive environments. As such defenses develop, this will shrink the areas in which the U-2 may safely operate. In light of the history of surface-to-air missile deployment outside the communist sphere, it seems doubtful that by 1970 the areas of safe operation for the U-2 will be much more circumscribed than at present.

5. To supplement future intelligence gathering reconnaissance, there exists a long-standing requirement for base-line photography of broad areas of the earth, particularly in Africa and South America. National sensitivities will preclude, in all probability, such acquisition other than by covert means. The U-2 provides the best vehicle for an enterprise of such magnitude.

6. The five-year forecast submitted to the ExCom on 1 September 1964 is still considered valid, and the utility life of the U-2 will depend largely on availability of aircraft as attrition takes its toll in the ensuing years.

(Signed) Jack C. Ledford

JACK C. LEDFORD
Colonel USAF
Director, Program B

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